

Director of Central Intelligence

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Special National Intelligence Estimate

Sudan: Problems and Prospects for the New Civilian Regime

Key Judgments

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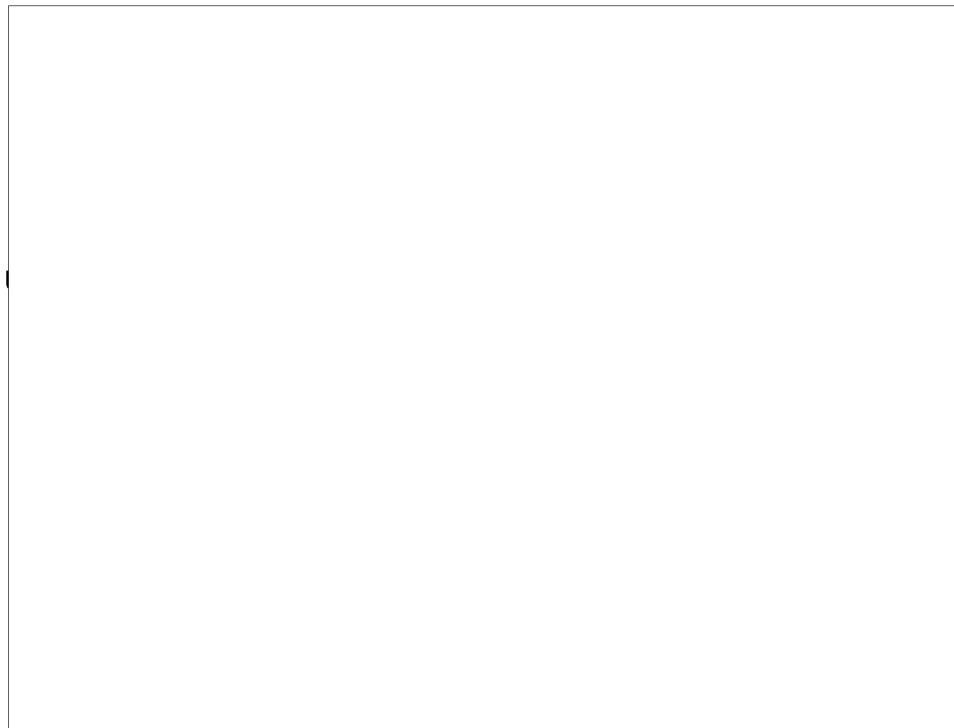
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**SUDAN: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS
FOR THE NEW CIVILIAN REGIME**

KEY JUDGMENTS

The full text of this Estimate
is being published separately
with regular distribution.

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SCOPE NOTE

This Special National Intelligence Estimate on Sudan is based on the assumption that the elections scheduled for April will take place and that a civilian government will take power. The Estimate focuses on the prospects for the survival of the new government over the next 12 months. Emphasis is given to the economic, military, and political problems that confront Khartoum, the external dimension that bears on these problems, alternative domestic outcomes, and their implications for the United States

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KEY JUDGMENTS

We believe that Sudan's soon-to-be-elected civilian government, most likely led by Sadiq al-Mahdi, may muddle through for almost a year but that there is a better-than-even chance that it will not remain in power much beyond that period. The new government's longevity will depend on how it manages five key problem areas:

- Endemic political factionalism in Khartoum.
- The status of Islam.
- Continuing deterioration of the economy.
- An expanding southern insurgency.
- The questionable loyalty of the security forces.

In our judgment, the new civilian government will not be able to address these problems effectively. We believe that, after a grace period of several months, the cumulative effects of these problems will begin to destabilize it. []

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Sadiq is probably Sudan's most experienced and skilled politician. He probably can expect a brief honeymoon in the first few months after the elections while he forms a national coalition government likely to include the left and southerners but possibly excluding the Muslim Brotherhood. Most civilian elites in Khartoum want the Army out of politics and support a democratic form of government, and the Army probably would prefer to see a civilian government confront Sudan's intractable problems for a time—keeping open the option to return to power. []

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A civilian coalition government is unlikely to maintain the necessary cohesion or discipline for effective leadership and will probably suffer from the factional infighting and petty, personal squabbles characteristic of the past. In the freer political climate in Sudan, the new government probably will be hard pressed to maintain stability in the north if infighting among party factions spills over into armed conflict or if ethnic and regional groups disgruntled over the outcome of elections initiate sabotage in Khartoum. []

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The status of Islam in Sudan could develop into a bitter and even violent controversy. Northern Muslim political groups, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, will be militantly in favor of an Islamic constitution, but southerners, other non-Muslims, and the left will demand a secular one. []

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Sudan's economic outlook is bleak. Acute shortages of goods and spiraling inflation will almost certainly lead to further labor unrest. A vicious cycle has already begun—of escalating demands by unions for higher wages followed by government concessions that entail further monetary expansion. With the government unable to provide any real increase in purchasing power, crippling strikes and work stoppages are likely to become an endemic feature of the Sudanese landscape in the year ahead. Such unrest will further debilitate an already prostrate economy and offer radical elements an issue to exploit. It will also be a factor in heightening intercommunal violence. []

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Prospects for resolving Sudan's international payments crisis are extremely bleak in the aftermath of the IMF decision declaring Khartoum ineligible to use the Fund's resources. Foreign donors, moreover, will probably not repay Sudan's arrears to the IMF in the likely absence of a sound economic reform program. The new government will probably remain mired in the traditional statist approach to resolving economic issues, and many donors will probably reduce balance-of-payments support, a move that will have a further adverse impact on Sudan's politically sensitive public-sector economy. []

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The Ethiopian-backed insurgency in southern Sudan poses a major challenge for the new government. The rebel force—15,000 to 20,000 strong—is growing and controls much of the southern countryside. The rebels will probably intensify attacks—possibly even carry out sabotage in the north—to maintain pressure on the new government to meet their constitutional demands. Meanwhile, Khartoum's efforts to acquire arms—even if successful—and reinforce southern garrisons are not likely to improve its military position. Khartoum's severe logistic problems, supply shortages, and military defeats will continue to lower morale and foster desertions of the undermanned and underequipped government combat units. []

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Resolution of the southern conflict probably will not be possible for the new government in the next year. Even if Khartoum holds a constitutional conference after the elections, meeting southern rebel demands will prove difficult, and prospects for meaningful negotiations will remain poor. Consequently, the insurgency is likely to remain a severe drain on Sudan's already limited economic reserves, a serious strain on the Army's unity and loyalty, and a stimulus for Khartoum to seek new arms suppliers. []

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The civilian government will pursue a neutral foreign policy because Sudan's civilian parties from the left to the Muslim Brotherhood favor nonalignment. In its search to enhance sources of economic aid and undercut support to the rebels, the government will maintain good relations with Libya, seek improved ties to Ethiopia, and hope to

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acquire some aid from the Soviet Union. Khartoum will still expect continued military and economic support from the United States, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, even though it is less able or willing to support many of the regional goals of these traditional allies. []

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The new government will continue the rapprochement begun with Libya last year in order to deny Libyan support to southern insurgents, to obtain Libyan economic and military aid, and to try to keep Libyan subversive machinations within some bounds. A Sadiq government will follow the interim government's pattern of acceding to some Libyan demands but attempt to evade Libyan efforts to ally Sudan formally with Libya. The new government will sign additional agreements with Libya, welcome Libyan military support, and avoid acts that would provoke Qadhafi, such as providing support to Libyan dissidents or acceding to closer military cooperation with the United States or Egypt.

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Overall, Libyan influence in Khartoum will probably increase over the next year in direct proportion to the supply of Libyan military and economic assistance. Libyan military support for the Sudanese Army's counterinsurgency efforts—which may well become Sudan's most significant source of such aid—will offer the Libyans further access to the Sudanese military for proselytizing and subversion, as well as influence with the new government. In the short term this will be partially offset by traditional anti-Libyan sentiments of much of the Sudanese officer corps and conservative religious and political factions. Libyan heavyhandedness also could provoke resentments and stimulate coup plotting by conservative Army officers. We cannot rule out, however, a Libyan effort to sponsor mob or terrorist attacks against the US or Egyptian presence in Sudan despite continued good relations with Khartoum. []

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The Army—especially the younger generals and unit commanders—would be likely to move to take over in the event of civil unrest, parliamentary paralysis, or a series of major defeats in the south. Few of the more senior officers are personally loyal to Sadiq al-Mahdi and probably even fewer are committed to a multiparty democracy. In the meantime, the police and civilian intelligence services have neither the capability nor loyalty to the Sadiq government that could prevent a military takeover []

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If, as we expect, the new civilian government fails to address Sudan's economic and political problems in a meaningful way, a crisis atmosphere will probably develop later this year. The likelihood of a move by Army officers to take power will increase by early next year. The most likely group to act will be a coalition of conservative young

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generals and colonels. While we cannot rule out plotting by junior officers, we see a successful coup from this group as much less likely.

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As the civilian government loses control, two other outcomes are possible but considerably less likely. A weakened civilian government could fully accede to insurgent leader Garang's demands for a fundamental restructuring of the political system. Such a move would probably be supported by leftist and non-Arab and non-Muslim factions but resisted by northern Muslim elites and much of the officer corps. Alternatively, a weakened civilian government could break down into contending armed factions—a situation reminiscent of Lebanon—with none of them strong enough to impose a firm new national government. Such an outcome would lead to the breakup of the security forces into their ethnic and religious component parts. The latter outcome would be seriously damaging to regional stability and injurious to US interests.

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The United States will probably face similar problems with either a Sadiq-led civilian government or a conservative military regime:

- Either would look to the United States for continued economic assistance but will be unable (and probably unwilling) to make comprehensive economic reforms.
- Either would press the United States for military help in combating the southern insurgency but would also accept military help from virtually any other source, including Libya and the USSR. On the other hand, Libyan economic and military ties could probably be reduced or eliminated—and Soviet ties preempted—should Sudan's traditional partners respond to Khartoum's perceived military and economic needs.
- Neither will be prepared to resume the level of military cooperation associated with the Nimeiri regime. Combined military exercises will be unlikely, and the pre-positioning agreement will be held in abeyance []

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A successor military government run by younger generals or colonels could provide Sudan with stability in the short run. Such a government might be strong enough to make hard decisions on the economy and the south. These officers would probably have greater incentive to end the war than most other groups in Sudan, and might show greater unity and flexibility in negotiating an end to the insurgency than an elected government hobbled by infighting and the demands of its northern Muslim constituents. We doubt that insurgent leader Garang would move quickly to deal with a new military regime, however, no matter how conciliatory it appeared. []

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A military regime, however, would pose an additional problem for the United States in that its restoration of order would probably involve detentions and suppression of at least some political parties. This would create a human and civil rights problem for the United States despite an apparent increase in public order. 

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